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Culturally disadvantaged children can learn well when they are offered a realistic curriculum and realistic materials of instruction. Educational demands from preschool through adult education require different instructional materials to properly educate low achievers regardless of their backgrounds. Publishers should aid the community in their efforts to meet the needs of these children. Areas for innovation and reform are discussed. Preschool kits for drugstore and supermarket retail sales are needed. They would contain manuals for parents and readiness booklets and materials for children. Urban scenes, rural themes, minority group characters, and modern living activities should be the subject matter of early grade readers. Eight- and nine-year reading programs, instead of the usual six-year programs, should be developed for disadvantaged children. Science and mathematics books should also be graded more realistically. Contemporary achievers, including those of minority groups, should be the subject of social studies textbooks. New materials are needed for dropouts and adult retraining; the subject matter should be related to the trade being studied and to problems likely to beset these groups. The under-educated can be developed through well planned programs. Publishers, educators, and specialists should be responsible for providing teaching materials and textbooks to meet the needs of these groups.					
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INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

FOR

LOW ACHIEVERS*

by

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EDU002281

It has become painfully clear to most Americans that more children and youth must stay in school, that they must stay longer and that they must receive a more thorough basic education than has formerly been the case.

The reasons for this are abundantly evident. The decline of the production worker through automation coupled with the paradox of great shortages of workers in the higher technology. Add to this the great outpouring of social consciousness in our country today which is demanding that the opportunity to share in America's bounty be extended to all and the educational demands of our times assume revolutionary proportions.

This will not be an easy challenge. Indeed, many observers have seen the future of public education in this country as hinging on the success or failure of our systems to rise and meet it. Personally, it seems incredible that we should doubt that we can succeed. A country which has developed the transportation, communications and food production and distribution systems such as ours has the ability to become eminently successful in dealing with the unemployed and the undereducated. If there is doubt, it must be concern that the morality necessary

*An abstract of a presentation to a joint Conference of the American Textbook Publishers Institute and the American Textbook Publishers Council (New York, April 8-9, 1964)

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to plan the programs and spend the money to help the down-trodden is present in our society.

Low achievers in our schools are not new. They are not a phenomena. They have always been there. They have never asked to stay as long, however. Neither have they been asked to return to school as adults and renew obsolescent skills as must presently be the case.

Low achievers come in many shapes and sizes and hues. There are low achievers (and many high achievers) among the culturally disadvantaged of which we hear so much about today. There are low achievers from advantaged and over-privileged groups. Creative children and children with emotional problems are low achievers and a large number in all of these categories do not have genetic potential for high academic achievement even though they have a fine potential to become good citizens.

By far the largest group of low achievers is the culturally disadvantaged. Our school system has never been and is not now geared to properly educating these children. Not the least important in this misalignment are the books and instructional materials. To expect academic success from these children under the system as presently constituted would be roughly comparable to having a child from Westchester County become a howling academic success in a school in a hostile Katmandu, studying the life and culture of Katmandu, taught by teachers from Katmandu and learning from books which were written in Katmandese and which were often hostile to Westchesterites.

Given a different and more realistic curriculum and different and more realistic materials of instruction, these children learn and they learn well. Publishers must meet the greater community half-way in their efforts to give these children their due.

The first big area for innovation and reform must be the pre-school and early primary years. About one third of the culturally disadvantaged children in our state, for example, fail the first grade because of deficiencies in school readiness. The difficulty is nationwide. The most exciting groundswell of planning and activity is in this direction. Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, California and others have state programs designed to stimulate local effort in the development of pre-school centers and community programs to develop readiness. The Agricultural Extension Service and the Home Demonstration Service are also engaged in the work of teaching disadvantaged people how to develop intelligent children and then helping them to achieve their goals. *id*

Materials will be needed for this program. Kits for drug-store and super-market retail sales are needed. These kits would contain manuals for the parents and readiness booklets and materials for the children. The cost must be low but the volume can and must be fantastic.

In the first grade and indeed in all grades, books and materials must be more realistic where urban and minority group citizens are concerned. Negroes must be included in these books and their treatment must be that of an ordinary citizen. The setting for urban children must be the central city. Sidewalk play, hop-skotch, skate trucks, the corner grocery and other aspects of city life must be included. Rural children might fare better with rural and small town themes ie; farm machinery, animals, the town square and the like.

Educators have begun to think in terms of eight and nine year reading programs instead of the usual six years for disadvantaged children. Publishers must supply these materials. Science and mathematics books must also be graded more realistically for these youth.

Social studies textbooks must be revised drastically and our minority groups must be included. One company has done a fine job in this respect. At least three others are moving in this direction. This is truly commendable. Negro youth especially must have Horatio Alger stories along this line. White children must learn through books that Negroes are not inferior.

Negro kids seem to like the contemporary achievers more than the past. The Carl Rowans, Jim Browns and Ambrose Nutts are hallowed. When they do look back, they like to read about the winners, Crispus Attucks the first to fall for the freedom of this country, Jean Du Sable the first settler of Chicago, Benjamin Banneker the great scientist, P. B. S. Pinchback former Lt. Governor of Louisiana and Toussaint L'Ouverture the great Caribbean freedom fighter plus others cause them to read and read and read.

Many new materials will be needed to make the new programs for drop-outs and adult retraining successful. The area of basic education is especially important in these programs.

The trainees must bring their competencies in the basic three rs up to the level demanded by the occupations for which they are preparing. The more successful programs are offering intensive instruction in reading, language arts and number skills. Many are relating this work closely to the trade being studied.

The trainee must also develop proper work habits and attitudes toward the new and higher job and toward the new and higher life which he is expected to lead. He must be led to expect to have to continue to learn and develop his abilities while he is working and to re-enter retraining if his newly won skill becomes obsolete. Successful programs are using a combination course involving occupational information and human relations.

Attention has been directed toward efforts of schools in our city to pioneer in home-based readiness programs for parents and school beginners and to replicate certain aspects of the Higher Horizons and Great Cities programs. A city planning commission effort to focus school and urban services efforts toward community uplift in a "Human Renewal" project is also attracting attention. Achievement levels are being raised in these efforts, youth are remaining in school longer, standards of living are being raised, a formerly beaten down group of people is looking up and the greater community is feeling better for having the opportunity to help.

Much attention and discussion have also been given to a demonstration-research training program of this type at our college. This project was eminently successful and a lot was learned about how to work with under-educated adults and how successful we can expect to be in future efforts. Our program was underwritten by the Office of Education and the Department of Labor. We trained 90 unskilled adults who would have been passed over by most training programs. An overwhelming majority of these men have jobs and they are making good citizens. The country will recoup its investment during the first year in reduced welfare costs. Most of the men will also pay taxes this year, some for the first time ever.

In sum the under-educated can be developed. Well planned programs are necessary. Teaching and teaching materials must be different. We all have a moral responsibility to play a role in this very fine effort which our country seems determined to make. Please accept my commendations for this fine manifestation of your determination to help.